

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
www.cdcwrt.net



Volume 30, Number 2 February 2013

LINCOLN'S FUNERAL & MEMORIAL STAMP



Lincoln lying in state in his coffin at City Hall, New York City, April 27, 1865. Sketch was done by Pierre Morand.



After Lincoln was assassinated, Secretary Edwin Stanton did not allow photograph of Lincoln's body. Several were taken but the plates were confiscated by Stanton and later destroyed. One photo of Lincoln in his coffin was spared and was in the safe-keeping of one of his secretaries. Years later the photo was discovered. The President's orbits became discolored due to hematoma

America's first mourning stamp was issued one year after Lincoln's death. It was a 15-cent stamp and the President's image was based on an 1861 photograph of Lincoln taken when he was the President-elect. A little more than two million were printed. An unused stamp in mint condition now is worth $1500, while a used stamp is worth $215. In 1869, a 90-cent Lincoln mourning stamp was issued in very limited numbers. A mint condition unused stamp is worth $6000.

FEBRUARY MEETING
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2013
WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

"STEALING LINCOLN'S BODY"

TOM CRAUGHWELL

Social Hour	**6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Business Meeting	**7:00 – 7:30 p.m.**
Presentation	**7:30 – 8:30 p.m.**
Questions & Answers	**8:30 – 9:00 p.m.**

CDCWRT MEETING

The February meeting of the Capital District Civil War Round Table will be held on Friday, February 8, 2013. This meeting will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center, 1541 Broadway in Watervliet. Our special guest speaker will be author, Thomas Craughwell, and his topic will be **STEALING LINCOLN'S BODY.**

Stealing Lincoln's Body is the story of a forgotten event in American history—how in 1876 a gang of hapless Chicago counterfeiters tried to kidnap the body of Abraham Lincoln and hold it for ransom. Thomas J. Craughwell, will tell this bizarre, intriguing story.

Thomas J. Craughwell is author of Stealing Lincoln's Body and most recently Thomas Jefferson's Crème Brulee. He has been self-employed as writer since 1992, and has written more than thirty books on history, religion, and popular culture. Tom has written articles for The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, U.S. News and World Report, The American Spectator, Emmy magazine, and Inside the Vatican. And he has been a guest on CNN, the BBC, FOX, and The Discovery Channel. In February 2009 the History Channel aired a two-hour documentary based on Stealing Lincoln's Body. Tom lives and writes from his home in Bethel, Connecticut.

Tom will bring some of his books for sale, and he will autograph books sold and any of his books that you may already have.



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DUES, DUES, DUES

This is a reminder that annual dues of $25 are payable NOW. Regular dues are used to cover any speakers' expenses for regular meeting, meeting refreshments, web site charges, and for the mailing of newsletters. About 50% of our membership has paid dues. Please do not jeopardize your membership by non-payment of dues.

Postage rates have now increased. Our printing costs have been minimal and printed newsletters have been donated to the CDCWRT because we are a 501c3 educational organization. If you wish to receive your newsletter by email, please contact any board member. This saves us postage, and allows you to receive the newsletter several days before the regular mailed newsletter arrives.

UP-COMING EVENTS

The following list of up-coming events is provided to help Round Table members plan their long term calendars. These are events that involve our Round Table, especially events that provide opportunities to raise funds for our preservation activities. Some events may change as the year progresses, so members should check the list monthly. Details of Sesquicentennial Civil War events can be found on the web-site: www.nycivilwar150.org.

On March 8, 2013, we have had a change in the speaker. We are honored to have Catherine Wright, curator at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, as our speaker. Her presentation is entitled, "Lee's Last Casualty: The Life and Letters ofb Robert Parker."

On April 12, 2013, Tony Zarnecki will talk about Mr. Lincoln's secret visit to West Point in 1862.

On May 10, 2013, Wayne Mott will speak on the Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, PA, and will bring some fascinating artifacts.

On June 14, 2013, Ben Dixon will talk about a photographic study of the Gettysburg Battlefield. His presentation is entitled "Remembering America's battlefield from 1863 to today." This presentation will be at Roger Bacon Hall at Siena College.

On September 13, 2013, Katherine Hawkins will present "We Done Our Part: The History of the 3rd U.S. Colored Troops."

On October 11, 2013, Wayne Mahood will talk about the 126th NYVI, in a presentation entitled "Fight All Day, March All Night."

On November 1-3, 2013, the CDCWRT will sponsor the 1863 Sesquicentennial Conference.

On December 13, 2013, J.J. Jennings will present a "To Be Announced" topic.

BOARD MEETING – 1/15/2013

Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted. The Treasurer reported $2603 in the regular account and $6768 in the preservation account after paying expenses for the Antietam cancels. The Membership Chair reported 174 members, and only a small number have not yet renewed. After 3 months, they will be dropped. Name tags will be ordered soon, and will cost $10 each.

DECEMBER MEETING

Although few people would add the torpedo to a list of Civil War weapons, after hearing Joseph Thatcher's Confederate Coal Torpedo presentation, members attending our December 14th meeting now know it was intended to be the Confederacy's secret weapon to paralyze Union shipping.

Englishman Thomas Courtenay settled in St Louis in 1843 where he engaged in the insurance business dealing chiefly with steamboat owners. A southern sympathizer, at the outbreak of the war he relocated to Arkansas and joined to staff of Sterling Price. With his steamboat expertise, Courtenay found Price's attempt to sabotage Union ships by doctoring fire wood with explosives amateurish and impractical because by the early 1860s few steamboats burned wood. Coal had become the primary fuel for their boilers. Courtenay's innovative solution was creating hollow pieces of iron, having them molded to look like lumps of coal. Explosive powder could be hidden inside, and with a covering of bee's wax and coal dust, would be almost impossible to detect when mixed in with a pile of coal about to be taken on board a steamboat. Shoveled into a flaming furnace along with actual coal, the ship would be history!

By early 1864 successful trials proved the prototype torpedo would work. The Confederate government agreed to supply the castings with Courtenay completing the process of manufacturing the torpedoes. Price granted Courtenay's request to form a secret service group to place torpedoes where they would do the most harm. He was allowed to have up to 25 men who

would then be ineligible for the Confederate draft. Co-operation from the Confederate government allowed group members to be transported wherever necessary to conduct their sabotage activities.

Confederate connections with their agents in Canada managed to smuggle them some torpedoes, which while intended primarily for shipping, could be made into a simple bombs. Springfield Arsenal had a close call when two "women" were allowed in on the premise of going up to look at the view. Later a bomb was found in a stairwell that hadn't gone off. Two other coal torpedoes were found in Canada during a police raid.

The success of the torpedoes was limited. In April of 1864 the ***Chenango*** was the first victim when its boilers were destroyed, putting it out of commission for a year. Courtenay claimed one of his torpedoes was responsible. Total destruction was the fate of the ***Grayhound*** blown up shortly after. The cause of the Sultana disaster with its huge losses of Union soldiers may never be determined. There was some suspicion at the time that a coal torpedo may have been the cause and years later a man named Robert Loudon claimed he had planted a coal torpedo on the overloaded Sultana, a claim that has never been verified.

Courtenay had gone to England before the war's end with his family, his wife raising funds for the Confederate war effort by singing Confederate songs at society balls. At war's end he remained in England, unsuccessfully attempting to sell his torpedo invention to foreign governments. His life was interrupted by the war, and he died impoverished in 1875. For the Confederacy his clever invention was too little, too late.

JANUARY MEETING

Despite a dreary, rainy January evening, there was a large turn out for our annual Potpourri meeting. **Lisa Potocar**, author of *Sweet Glory*, a historical novel with a Civil War theme, described how she came to write the book and the prodigious amount of research that was necessary as she developed the novel's plot, characterization and events. Actually intended for a young adult audience, the book has found favor with more mature readers as well.

In considering the focus of her prospective Civil War novel Ms Potocar stumbled on the fact that during the conflict over 300 women disguised themselves as men to fight in both the Union and Confederate armies. This gave her the inspiration that her plot would revolve around a young woman who disguised herself to enlist in a Union cavalry unit.

Beginning her research she attempted to uncover as much information as possible about these women. Next she determined the cavalry regiment her character would join, settling on the 10th New York, a regiment associated with Elmira. Finding a regimental history authored by the regiment's quartermaster that covered the entire time they served was a stroke of luck providing her with a tremendous amount of first hand information about the experiences of these men during the war. A visit to Elmira to get a sense of place by viewing its setting and its surviving 19th century buildings turned out to be very successful journey because she ended up at the Chemung Country Historical Society library and there discovered a 19th century history of Chemung county that proved invaluable. In doing her research she also referred to other printed sources including books, maps and brochures, and whenever possible sought information from primary sources such as diaries and letters.

Another phase in preparing to write her story accurately was to visit battlefields such as Brandy Station where the regiment saw action. She found park historians and rangers to be very helpful in sharing their knowledge and often phoned them as well as conferred with them on site. Doing general reading on the history of the Civil War was another aspect of her research to get the overall picture of the time.

Finally she drew on all the factual information she had amassed to imaginatively take her original story idea, flesh it out and write her first historical novel. It is to Ms. Potocar's credit that she attempted to make her fictional creation as historically accurate as possible and hopes young adult readers will get as hooked on history as she has become.

Next the mutiny of 201 men of the 20th New York and the research involved in uncovering the details of this little known event was recounted by **Lindsay Davenport**, a Siena senior. Asked to write a 15 to 20 page paper during her semester at Gettysburg College, she chose this topic not realizing it was such an obscure event that there was virtually no information to be found as she initially began by Googling the mutiny. Her search became more complicated by the fact that during the war there was a second 20th New York from Ulster County while her 20th New York originated in Brooklyn and New York City. Her search was made even more difficult because there was no regimental history. She found only one book that that had some limited information, but the mutiny was unmentioned. More intense research gave her additional general information about the regiment, but nothing about the mutiny.

Her 20th New York was a German regiment composed of men who left Germany for political reasons, especially after the failed Revolution of 1848. Known as the Turner Rifles, the regiment's soldiers were members of the Turnverein, a German gymnastic and patriotic society. Five companies of the 20th enlisted April 27th, 1861 for a period of months while the second group of companies enlisted for two years. The original enlistees' enlistment was extended for two years as well. On May 11th they became a Federal regiment and as far as the U.S. government was concerned that was the date of their enlistment.

Even though they participated in a number of battles they were usually kept to the rear, although at Antietam they led the 6th Corps to the Dunker Church. Finally as far as the original five companies were concerned, their enlistments were up as of April 27, 1863 just as major action was looming at Chancellorsville. The surviving members of the original five companies laid down their arms and refused to fight. By May 1, 1863 they were court-martialed and sentenced to hard labor for the duration of the war.

Having been told there was material in the National Archives, Ms. Davenport finally found the information she needed in Court Martial documents showing that their English speaking officers were made to identify the men who refused to do their duty, effectively condemning them from the start. When they learned of the verdict the North's German community was outraged. The Turner Society sent a petition to Lincoln emphasizing their patriotism, bringing the whole situation to Lincoln's attention. German supporters, including the most prominent German immigrants in the Union, sent a deluge of letters to Lincoln as well as putting pressure on Stanton. Lincoln requested a review of the case by Advocate General Holt and ended up pardoning these soldiers in September 1863. It was only in 1905 that the men were given honorable discharges, allowing them to apply for pensions.

She expects to use the information about the 20th New York's mutiny as the subject of her senior paper at Siena and will continue researching the regiment, beginning with a diary of a member of the regiment that she has located in the archives of the New York Historical Society. She will be examining this document in the near future, but unfortunately a major complication is that it's in German of course! CDCWRT members were pleased to hear from someone so young who was so enthusiastic about Civil War history.

Stu Lehman followed, displaying and explaining two of the lesser known and barely used rifles of the war. The Greene Breech-loading, bolt action rifle invented in 1857 was the first to be used by U.S. soldiers. The inventor James Durrell Greene sold 3,000 of these to Russia, but only 900 to the U.S. Government which put them in storage until after the war and a few to the Massachusetts militia who used them at Antietam. The gun had some bizarre features and wasn't entirely practical. The second weapon was a Colt Revolving Rifle which had been found in a

chimney in Kingston and was damaged. The gun's appearance was that of a revolver with a long barrel attached and was impractical to use in actual battle.

Finally **Tom Baker** briefly explained that he has taken 10,000 photos of Gettysburg monuments since 2006 and had several on display at our meeting. There are slightly fewer than 1,000 monuments and he has only about 20 more to record. As always Potpourri night brought us interesting and informative presentations.

As usual, these excellent summaries were provided by the CDCWRT secretary, Mary Ellen Johnson. Thank you so much.

LINCOLN'S FUNERAL

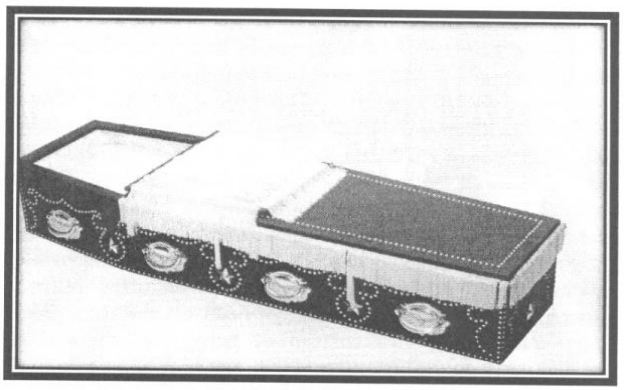
The following is taken from a book entitled, "**Coffins, Kits, and More!: Stories of the Civil War Embalmers,"** by Lee Ward (2007).

At 9:00 a.m. on April 15, 1865 Lincoln's body was returned to the White House guest room to await the autopsy. Nine men were present for the autopsy of the head. The bullet was recovered and the brain was removed and weighed. After the autopsy, the firm of Brown and Alexander provided embalming services. This took place in the guest room, later ***renamed the Lincoln Bedroom. The firm had previously embalmed the body of Willie Lincoln who had died in February 1862. Harry Pratt Cattell from the firm performed the embalming. In a published interview in 1901 Cattell related he used only the ordinary embalming fluid then in use, named the French preparation. The solution was zinc chloride, made by dissolving sheets of zinc in hydrochloric acid. Soon the President's body hardened to a marble-like state. Stanton supervised the dressing of Lincoln's body. Upon the final examination, Stanton noticed that the black under the President's eyes had spread down his cheeks. This was the result of blood that had seeped into the orbits since orbital bones had been fractured by the bullet. Stanton was asked if the undertaker should use chemicals to erase this, but he replied "No, this is part of the history of the event."***

Three persistent rumors have been denied: first, that a preliminary embalming had been performed in the Petersen House; secondly, that a death mask had been made; and thirdly, that a photograph had been taken of the bed in which Lincoln had died, showing a bloody pillow.

Another undertaking firm, Harvey & Co., was responsible for the building of a suitable coffin. Solid walnut was chosen for the wood. It was six feet six inches long on the outside and was lined with lead sheet. The interior was upholstered with tufted white satin. It had sterling silver handles, four to a side, and an engraved sterling silver nameplate.

Abraham Lincoln
Sixteenth President of the United States
Born February 12, 1809
Died April 15, 1865



There was a unique, unexpected feature to the coffin. Between each handle was a shamrock formed by silver tacks. The Irish symbol was not ordered, nor was it ever explained. It may have been the design of an Irish undertaker's artist who had been told to design something beautiful and fit for a president. In the center of each shamrock was a silver star. There was also a star at each end of the coffin. The lid was hinged to fold back a third of the way down to allow viewers to see the President's face and shoulders. The catafalque upon which the coffin lay was designed by

Benjamin French, a 33rd degree Mason. He built the catafalque to resemble the Lodges of Sorrow which were the central feature of Masonic funerals. Four seven-foot-high posts were set ten feet apart along the sides. An arched canopy rose from the tops of the posts to a height of eleven feet from the floor. The upper side of the canopy was made of black alpaca, and the finest black velvet decorated its sides with sweeping garlands of black crepe material. Sixteen huge black satin rosettes were set at the highest point of each festoon. The underside of the canopy was white fluted satin, which reflected a small amount of light on the face of the President.

While the coffin lay in state in the East Room of the White House over 20,000 people filed past in two lines, each pausing a second to gaze upon the face of Lincoln. Robert Lincoln and other close family sat at the foot of the coffin, while Mary Todd Lincoln was locked in her bedroom attended by Elizabeth Keckley. The funeral itself was held shortly after noon on Wednesday, April 19th. About 600 guests came into the East Room. There was a cross of lilies near the head of Mr. Lincoln, beside which Gen. Ulysses S. Grant sat. Robert Lincoln sat at the opposite end of the coffin. Dr. Phineas D. Gurley, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church preached the funeral sermon. Twelve Army sergeants carried the coffin to the funeral hearse drawn by six gray horses. A contingent of USCT led the parade. As the hearse proceeded up Pennsylvania Avenue, twenty pallbearers from Congress, the military and civil life preceded it on foot. Thousands of Union soldiers filed in behind. At the end of the parade behind the dignitaries and soldiers were 40,000 newly-freed blacks.

Over 100,000 lined the route to the Capitol. Yet despite the enormous crowd, the silence was profound. The next day another 25,000 of the general public paid their last respects. Following services in Washington, the President was placed on a special train that began the 1,654 mile trip to Springfield, tracing the route Lincoln had taken in coming to Washington. Little Willie Lincoln's coffin was also on board. After funeral services for Willie in 1862, temporary entombment was made in the W. T. Carroll family vault in Oak Hill Cemetery at Georgetown. The President had visited the vault twice to have the coffin opened so that he could look at him again. Father and son were reunited for the trip home.

The President was viewed in thirteen cities by more than a million people. In Philadelphia it was discovered that the face had turned black and was no longer in a proper condition to be viewed. The coffin was then closed. In Springfield the coffin was again opened and the face was found to be almost black. The accompanying undertaker procured rouge chalk and amber from a drugstore, and applied a very thick layer to hide the skin discoloration. Public viewing then was again allowed.

The Springfield funeral procession was led by Maj.-Gen. Joseph Hooker to Oak Ridge Cemetery. Mrs. Lincoln remained in mourning in the White House. The President and Willie were placed in a temporary tomb. A much larger tomb was built by 1871; then Lincoln and sons Willie, Eddie (who had died in Springfield) and Tad (who died of pneumonia after returning from Europe in 1871) were placed in the tomb. The President was removed from the walnut casket and was placed in a metal one. In 1874 he was again transferred to a lead-lined red cedar coffin, which was placed in a white marble sarcophagus. Witnesses reported the body was in a good state of preservation.

On November 7, 1876 grave robbers attempted to steal the body and hold it for ransom. Federal agents infiltrated the gang however. Lincoln's coffin was removed from the sarcophagus and was placed in a basement under the tomb. On October 14, 1887 the coffins of the President and the now deceased Mary Todd Lincoln were placed in a specially constructed vault beneath the burial chamber.

The total cost of the Lincoln funeral was a staggering $8,903.15 paid by the Commissioner of Public Buildings, Benjamin French.